DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 361 691 CS 213 983

AUTHOR Yahr, Michael A.
TITLE Humanistic Insights into Managing Diversity: The Humanities/Management Partnership.
PUB DATE Apr 93
NOTE 15p.; Revised version of a paper presented at the Annual Languages and Communication for World Business and the Professions Conference (12th, Ypsilanti, MI, April 1993).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Business Administration Education; Communication Skills; Cross Cultural Studies; *Cultural Awareness; *Cultural Context; Cultural Pluralism; Curriculum Enrichment; *Global Approach; Higher Education; Humanistic Education; Multicultural Education
IDENTIFIERS China; Japan

ABSTRACT

Global managers of the 1990s and beyond must have definitive impacts on their work environments. Among the skills they need to possess are the abilities to adapt to new and fast-changing situations and to interact with people who view the business world from varied perspectives. A humanities/management partnership offers a viable and effective approach to producing such managers. The process of management is a culture-specific phenomenon. Culture largely determines how labor is treated, employed, and motivated; how corporations are structured; and how decisions are formulated. Because the countries bordering the Pacific Ocean will play a central role in international trade and relations in the coming decade and beyond, texts, ideas, themes and issues from China and Japan can be utilized by management faculty to foster cross cultural appreciation in an increasingly interdependent world. Internationalization of the curriculum is a process that suggests collaborative teaching efforts. Strategic management may be used to both conceptualize and bring about a humanities/management partnership using specific measurable outcomes and objectives to facilitate the integration of new cultural materials. (Contains 15 references.) (NH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 361 691

Humanistic Insights Into Managing Diversity: The Humanities/Management Partnership

Michael A. Yahr
Associate Professor of Management
Robert Morris College
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

CS 213 983

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Michael Yahr

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

This essay grew out of a National Endowment for the Humanities Grant to create a faculty study project to internationalize the humanities curriculum at Robert Morris College. The project is developing a conceptual model of undergraduate curricular internationalization that can be applied by the professional disciplines within the College. Spearheaded by Dr. John Jarvis, Assistant Professor of Communications, the project aims to utilize texts, ideas, themes and issues from China and Japan to, among other goals, foster cross cultural appreciation in an increasingly interdependent world. Some obstacles and bridges to a partnership between the Humanities and Management disciplines are highlighted in this paper. A longer version was presented at the Twelfth Annual Conference on Languages and Communication for World Business and the Professions, April, 1993.

It is a fortuitous beginning for an ambitious project that it is being attempted in the newly arrived "year of the chicken", (1992-93), 4691 on the Chinese calendar. "Ji", the Chinese word for chicken, is often associated with a similar sounding word for luck (Kristof, 1993a) and is, therefore, an optimistic augury for our faculty study undertaking, as well as the Chinese people.

From the perspective of the management discipline, China and Japan seem appropriate places to start an examination of other cultures. Much has been written about the rise of the Pacific rim in this decade and beyond; the countries bordering the Pacific Ocean will play a central role in international trade and relations. According to one prognosticator, the economic shift to the Pacific rim is proceeding at a pace that is without precedent. Asia, a $3 trillion market is burgeoning at the rate of $3 billion a week. But the shift is necessarily cultural as well (Naisbitt 1990). There are over 1,000 different languages spoken along the rim and increasing literacy and improved education are fueling this growth.

One half of the world's population resides in Asia and China, alone, holds about twenty percent of the globe's populace. China may now have the second largest economy based on purchasing power. In three of the past six years China has generated a double digit growth in gross national product adjusted for inflation capped by a twelve percent expansion in 1992. Some economists contend this phenomenal growth is partly grounded in the Confucianistic respect for education and savings (Kristof,

1993b).

The impressive transformation of Japan from a country devastated by atomic weaponry to a major industrial player necessitates its inclusion in a cross cultural management curriculum. By the mid-1950's the Japanese had astonishingly regained their prewar per capita production levels and from the late 50's to the late 60's they averaged real annual growth rates of about ten percent, a sustained growth rate previously achieved by no other industrialized nation. By the mid 1980's Japan was trading at a total $50 billion surplus, with almost every country in East Asia and the western Pacific (Reischauer 1988). Today Japan a nation without the competitive advantages of abundant resources or land, is the world's biggest creditor. The seven largest banks in the world, as ranked by asset value, are Japanese. Likewise, four out of the top five securities firms and insurers, ranked by carital and assets respectively, are Japanese. NTT, Toyota, Matsushita Electric and Hitachi are among the world's largest industrial firms (World Business 1992). And according to the International Country Risk Guide, Japan is among the ten safest investment havens based on composite political, economic and financial risk (World Business 1991). But an understanding of this economic "miracle" would be incomplete without a knowledge of the cultural history of the Japanese people.

Adding Value Via Cultural Exploration

The natures of the individuals and groups that comprise Japanese and Chinese societies are inseparable and integral parts of their country's successes. One way for the global manager of tomorrow to approach an understanding of other societies is through an examination of the texts, ideas, themes and issues fostered by these cultures. The wedding of the humanities, broadly equated here with the study of culture, and the discipline of management is a compatible relationship for many reasons. The profession of management and the business organization reciprocally, both influence and are influenced, by significant humanistic issues. The organization is a two-way open system, receiving societal inputs and responding to them. Complex and sometimes controversial concerns such as substance use and abuse, smoking hazards, homosexuality, AIDS and crime challenge business organizations as they do countries. Many firms, taking an extensive view of social responsibility go beyond reacting to these issues and proactively seek to manage them both externally and within.

The process of management is, as are most extensions of society, a culture specific phenomenon. How we employ, motivate and treat labor, how we structure our corporations, and how we formulate decisions are, as all aspects of management, largely determined by our culture. Values that filter managerial perceptions are adopted from society. To study management without a cultural context would be a distorted and incomplete

experience. The context within which management occurs precipitates, enhances, constrains and transcends the process.

A recent rise in the number of East Asian students (almost six percent of my current Principles of Management classes) has aroused the curiosity of our largely commuter population. The desire to know and understand these newcomers provides a personal and relevant reason, (and perhaps, exigency) to broadly examine other cultures.

Cultural study presents benefits beyond its relevance to understanding others' behavior, not the least of which, is understanding ourselves. One of the most effective means for recognizing the operation and pervasiveness of culture is to confront a different culture. As anthropologist Edward Hall and others have argued, what is closest to us, our culture, is known least well (1981). When immersed in another culture (e.g., managing abroad) one's conditional behavior may be frustratingly inadequate; that inadequacy may lead to a questioning exploration and comprehension of one's learned and accepted modes of behavior. Students may learn that there are other perceptions that are as significant and "normal" as theirs and that their perceptual set can restrict or preclude an understanding of other cultures. And tying literature to business allows the student to see that college courses are more than just disjointed offerings.

Obstacles to the Partnership

A major challenge to any curriculum change is integration of the material. Merely adding new material will not

internationalize the curriculum. The literatures, ideas, issues and themes must improve courses by enabling students to achieve clear goals. But which literary works best serve the project? Which themes, ideas and issues should be emphasized? Management faculty are not necessarily foreign culture experts.

Faculty are constrained by time and authority as well as knowledge and experience. How to effectively use classroom time in a course not entirely devoted to international coverage and which pedagogical methodologies to employ are open ended concerns. Internationalization of the curriculum is a process that suggests collaborative teaching efforts and possible travel. This implies a need to lower the barriers to traditional and often closely guarded subject areas and to access cross-discipline and cross-college cooperation. Changes in attitude and infrastructure are mandated. Guidance from experts is an urgency.

While the study project is directed by experts from academia and business the political constraints to collaborative efforts have yet to be addressed. The "right" themes and issues will evolve from the expert guidance and ongoing faculty and student discussions. These problems, however, may be minimized with an effective and cooperative approach.

A Strategic Management Approach

A tool of the profession, strategic management, may be used to both conceptualize and bring about the humanities/management

partnership. Strategic management is a process of matching an organization to its environment. It usually includes an environmental analysis, statement of mission, strategic objectives and options, managed implementation and control of the strategies.

An organization reviews its internal environment, its infrastructure and corporate culture, for strengths to exploit and for weaknesses to compensate. Similarly, the macro-external environment, i.e., political, social, economic forces, etc., and the more immediate task environment, i.e., suppliers, competitors, customers, etc. are examined for potential opportunities and threats. This analysis is partly historical and always future oriented. The organization next derives its goals and outcomes from its mission or purpose, formulates strategies for achieving its ends, and executes and continuously monitors those strategies. These elements must be consistent and often involve a variety of groups from the organization. While strategic management is fraught with pitfalls, it offers a deliberate systematic approach to managing a firm's interaction with its significant environments.

Our College's concern for internationalization, our literature study project's efforts, and the School of Managements' attempt at a humanities/profession alliance may all be viewed as a hierarchy of activities in a strategic management approach. The College has recognized an opportunity to fill a niche by providing a broader, global emphasis. The faculty study

project, a cross-departmental matrix group is dually involved in formulating objectives/strategies and preparing the faculty to implement the internationalization process. The latter entails identifying qualified faculty, and creating new courses and methodologies while at the same time educating other faculty in Chinese and Japanese culture; that is, changing the infrastructure and organizational culture to promote success. The need to integrate a global view is widely perceived as important, allowing for a faster, smoother transition. The involvement of a relatively large proportion of faculty (about 15%) in the early stages of this project will, most likely, lead to greater ownership and acceptance during implementation and control. But the study group and various business disciplines need to set appropriate objectives, derived from College goals.

Goals of the Joint Venture

Specific and measurable outcomes and objectives are needed to facilitate the integration of new cultural materials in the management classroom at the undergraduate level. General objectives have surfaced from the project, but more specific ones are likely to evolve, post facto, from the classroom. The ends below, move the student toward the higher levels of Benjamin Bloom's taxonomies (1956). While they focus on the first three levels of the cognitive scale, knowledge (awareness), comprehension and application, decision making inherently requires some degree of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. And

appreciation of another culture is a higher level affective outcome.

Two related objectives and select outcomes follow:

I. To create an awareness and appreciation for the cultures and cultural history of China and Japan.

Students, orally and in writing, will begin:

To recognize similarities and differences in the popular dimensions of culture such as language, time orientation, use of space and religion.

To recognize similarities and differences in major values.

To become aware of ethnocentric biases.

To understand how culture influences business and management.

II. To identify and apply management concepts cross-culturally.

Students, orally and in writing, will:

Identify similarities and differences in the economies, organizations and management processes among China, Japan and the U.S.

Explain the advantages/disadvantages of foreign investment and multi-national operations.

Use fundamental managerial concepts (e.g. leadership, authority, political action, power, delegation, etc.) to compare/contrast the functions of planning, organizing, leading and controlling.

Concepts play a paramount role in the educational process.

Concepts are general notions or ideas that allow us to identify and categorize processes, events and people in different situations and thus serve as a springboard for bridging cultures. Concepts can be "border spanners" that connect seemingly disparate behaviors. Managerial considerations such as how tasks are accomplished or decisions are made may be cross-culturally compared via such concepts as authority, power, and organizational design, to name a few. Concepts, then, will help to shape a relevant context for a study of foreign literatures.

Values are another natural cross-cultural bridge. The research of Geert Hofstede serves as one example. Hofstede has looked at four value dimensions across forty countries and has clearly shown how different cultures' value orientations might lead to different behaviors (1984).

These value dimensions (e.g., masculinity-femininity or individualism-collectivism), like concepts, provide a backdrop for introducing and examining literary works. But comprehension of any culture is not a mean task. An awareness of some of the perceptual hazards of looking at another culture allows for a less ethnocentric and more circumspect approach. Professor Fred Clothey, Chairman of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, cautions against the use of distorted lenses. One, the "lens of benign neglect" leads us to ignore others and to live and let live. But to not see others is to not see ourselves. The "lens of pejorative putdown" victimizes those that do not meet our standards. With the "lens of the noble

savage" Americans arrogantly view another culture with a paternalistic attitude. And through the "lens of selective romanticism" we project ourselves and believe what we want to see. It is only through the "lens of looking carefully" that we empathetically gaze with few preconceptions (1993).

Can a study of Japanese and Chinese literatures be directly related to the partnership's goals? The answer, as implied above, is yes. But there will be little comprehension without context. Concepts and values help to provide a relevant background. Students' knowledge may be another bridge. When my Organizational Behavior students were recently asked to list four "things" they knew about China and Japan, their responses were surprisingly detailed. One student accurately related the comparative sizes of the GNP's of Japan and the U.S. Another, mentioned the Chinese attempt at population control and how this might affect the family. A third revealed some knowledge of the Chinese dynasties. Collaboratively, the class provided many connections that could facilitate an examination of the literatures.

Implementation

One example of an interesting vehicle for beginning to understand the Japanese mind is the business novel. *Kēzai Shōsetsu*, the Japanese business novel, is a fascinating literary genre that reveals both corporate and popular culture. Since the 1950's these short novels (short stories) have painted fictional

but realistic pictures of Japanese economic activities. Translator and professor Tamae K. Prindle, describes the close relationship between business considerations and the people involved in these novels:

> ....Their distinctive features are that business activities motivate plot developments, although psycho-socio-cultural elements are tightly interwoven. Dry economic theories are given flesh and blood by literary explorations. An encounter with business novels, hence, is a double-edged experience in which humanity is felt and objective theories are understood (1989, xii).

The business novel holistically relates the lives of individuals to the economic system, making it easier for the Japanese (or American) reader to identify with and understand the business situation. Business novels are but one literary choice that may lead to the accomplishment of the previously mentioned goals.

The global managers of the 1990's and beyond must have definitive impacts on their work environments. Among the skills they need to possess are the abilities to adapt to new and fast changing situations and to interact with people who view the business world from varied perspectives. As political and economic changes in Asia, Europe and elsewhere fuel nationalistic spirits, this latter ability becomes of paramount importance. The need for an international emphasis in the discipline of management is increasing. And the humanities/management partnership described above offers one viable, effective and interesting approach to growing managers.

REFERENCES

Bloom, B.S. ed. 1956. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*. Longman, Inc. New York.

Clothey, F. 1993. Images, Mirrors and Lenses: Perceptions and Understandings of other Cultures. Lecture at Robert Morris College [November 18].

Hall, E.T. 1981. *Beyond Culture*. Doubleday. New York. 45.

Hofstede, G. 1984. *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. Sage Publications. Beverly Hills, California.

_____ and Bond M.H. 1988. The Confucius Connection: From Culture Roots to Economic Growth. *Organizational Dynamics 16*. 4-21.

Kristof, N.D. 1993. For Better or Worse, Year of Rooster Dawns. *The New York Times International* [January]: 6.

_____. 1993. Entrepreneurial Energy Sets off a Chinese Boom. *The New York Times* [February]: 1,6.

Naisbitt, J. and Aburdene, P. 1990. *Megatrends 2000: Ten New Directions for the 1990's*. Wm. Morrow & Co., Inc. New York. Chapter 6.

Prindle, T.K. ed. 1989. *Made In Japan and Other Japanese "Business Novels"*. M.E. Sharpe, Inc.

Reischauer, E.O. 1988. *The Japanese Today: Change and Continuity*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Cambridge Mass. 112-17, 140, 142.

Schermerhorn, J.R., Hunt, J.G. and Osborn, R.N. 1991. *Managing Organizational Behavior*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Fourth Edition.

Shiroyama, S. 1959. Made in Japan. *Made In Japan and Other Japanese "Business Novels"*. M.E. Sharpe, Inc. 58.

_____. 1959. Kinjō the Corporate Bouncer. *Made In Japan and Other Japanese "Business Novels"*. M.E. Sharpe, Inc. 58.

World Business. 1992. *The Wall Street Journal* [September 24]: R1-R27.

World Business. 1991. *The Wall Street Journal* [September 20]: R4.